

My Day

Eleanor Roosevelt

NEW YORK, July 14, 1939 - A number of letters have come to me complaining bitterly about the fact that I said in an article recently that the repeal of prohibition had been a crusade carried on by women. I know quite well, of course that the Democratic Party took the stand in its platform that Prohibition should be repealed. I have always felt, however, that the women's organization for repeal, which was a nonpartisan organization, laid the groundwork which finally brought about the vote for repeal.

I was one of those who was very happy when the original prohibition amendment passed. I thought innocently that a law in this country would automatically be complied with, and my own observation led me to feel rather ardently that the less strong liquor anyone consumed the better it was. During prohibition I observed the law meticulously, but I came gradually to see that laws are only observed with the consent of the individuals concerned and a moral change still depends on the individual and not on the passage of any law.

Little by little it dawned upon me that this law was not making people drink any less, but it was making hypocrites and law breakers of a great number of people. It seemed to me best to go back to the old situation in which, if a man or woman drank to excess, they were injuring themselves and their immediate family and friends and the act was a violation against their own sense of morality and no violation against the law of the land.

I could never quite bring myself to work for repeal, but I could not oppose it, for intellectually I had to agree that it was the honest thing to do. My contacts are wide and I see a great many different groups of people, and I cannot say that I find that the change in the law has made any great change in conditions among young or old in the country today.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eleanor/sfeature/md_ke_02.html